

# SCOTLAND'S STORY



**13**

**David follows  
in a giant's  
footsteps**

**A dynasty is  
born as the  
Stewarts  
take power**

**Struck down by  
the Black Death**

**Halls of glory at  
the renaissance  
of Stirling Castle**

**Firm favourites:  
Tully and McPhail**



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ATLANTIC  
OCEAN



Orkney

**1328**

Robert Bruce's infant son David is married to Edward III's sister Joan. A year later David II becomes King.



**1332**

The Scots lose heavily at the Battle of Dupplin. David and his child bride flee to Chateau Gaillard in France.



**1346**

The Scots lose the Battle of Neville's Cross after David II invades England to help the French.



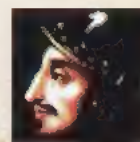
**1349**

The Black Death hits Scotland for the first time spread by the fleas on rats.



**1390**

Robert III succeeds his father Robert II, but proves to be ineffective.



**1402**

Robert III's son David dies in Falkland Castle, apparently of starvation, while his uncle's prisoner.



**1390**

The Wolf of Badenoch sacks Elgin Cathedral in his feud with the Bishop.



**1406**

Robert III dies soon after hearing his son James is a captive of the English.



**1503**

James IV holds celebrations to mark the opening of the Great Hall at Stirling Castle



**In Part 14:  
The Lords  
of the Isles**

PART OF  
IRELAND

North  
Channel

PART  
ENGLA





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Robert Bruce's son and heir, David II, was propelled into both marriage and the monarchy while still an infant. As a king he worked hard for Scotland, when not imprisoned or in exile.

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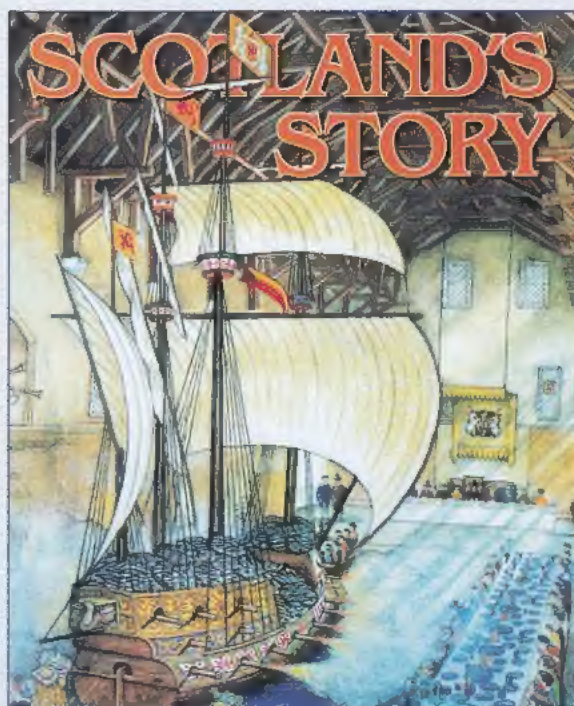
The recently-restored Great Hall at Stirling Castle was the scene of extravagant celebrations as James IV unveiled his answer to the magnificent palaces of the French and English kings. Part Two of a fascinating series by William J Adams.

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## COMMENT



**COVER:**  
Sailing through past glories. When James VI celebrated the baptism of his son Henry, a mock galleon served one of the courses at a banquet in Stirling Castle's Great Hall.

## A hard task made even tougher...

**R**obert Bruce, the hero king was always going to be an impossibly hard act to follow. But fate conspired to make his son David II's task tougher still.

Bruce was 50 with no surviving children when his second wife gave birth to twins in 1324.

Only one boy, David, survived and rapidly became a pawn in the power politics of the day.

At the age of four he was married to seal the peace between Scotland and England. When Bruce died in 1329 the five-year-old became King of Scots.

He and his child bride spent their early years exiled in France. On his return, defeat on the field of battle consigned him to 11 years in the Tower of London.

When he did get the chance to rule, David proved to be tough and competent... begging the question of what he might have achieved in better times.

**T**wo of Scotland's less dynamic kings, Robert II and his son Robert III, founded our greatest royal dynasty.

Robert Stewart was 55 when he succeeded the childless David in 1371. History may have judged him harshly, yet under his rule

Scotland prospered and was at peace.

At one stage his own son mounted a coup against him and for three years ruled as Guardian.

Robert III, after being kicked by a horse, lacked the physical and mental strength for kingship, and he too suffered the ignominy of having a Guardian rule in his stead.

At the height of the power struggles, one of Robert II's sons apparently starved his own nephew to death.

Yet despite their poor start, the Stewart line went on to rule Scotland and later England till the late 17th century – a volatile royal dynasty that has a direct link to the throne today.

**I**n these days of wonder drugs and transplant surgery it is hard to comprehend the raw fear the Black Death engendered when it first ravaged Scotland in 1349.

Children were too terrified to tend their parents when the plague struck, leaving them to die alone.

Scotland lost a sixth of her population of one million souls in the first outbreak – a relatively light toll from a killer that would go on to wipe out one in four people throughout Europe.





■ The Battle of Neville's Cross in 1346. David II attacked England to help the French, who gave him sanctuary, but the Scots suffered a crushing defeat.

# David followed in a giant's footsteps

**Robert Bruce's infant son had greatness thrust upon him. But his reign was far from easy, or happy**

**A**fter more than 20 years of marriage, the second wife of King Robert the Bruce had borne him no surviving children, and in 1318 the throne had been settled – if the king should have no son – upon his grandson, Robert Stewart, son of the daughter of King Robert by his first marriage.

But the queen at last gave birth to twin boys, David and John, at Dunfermline Abbey on March 5, 1324.

John died as a child, and in 1326 David was

recognised in parliament as his father's heir.

When at last peace was made with England, to cement it David was married in July, 1328, to Joan (born 1321), sister of Edward III, and they retreated as Earl and Countess of Carrick to Turnberry Castle.

On June 7, 1329, aged five, David became King of Scots.

At first under Thomas Randolph, Earl of Moray, as Guardian (until 1332) the country was well run. The English were paid off by



1331 so that the independence guaranteed in the treaty was unquestionable.

In celebration the boy David was crowned and anointed as King of Scots in a ceremony at Scone in November, 1331.

But Edward III resented the 'shameful' peace, and in 1332 helped Edward Balliol to invade Scotland, openly supporting him from 1333.

At the battle of Dupplin, the new Guardian, Donald, Earl of Mar – a nephew of Robert Bruce – was defeated and killed.

It was the first of a series of disasters to afflict Scotland from 1333-37, when Edward III and Edward Balliol sought to subdue the country.

David II was a refugee in Dumbarton Castle before he and his wife were sent to France in 1334. For seven years they lived in the great stronghold of Château Gaillard, overlooking the Seine at Les Andelys.

Only in 1341, when Edward III had lost interest in Scotland and was seeking to become king of France, was it judged safe for David and Joan to return to their kingdom.

Five years of warfare had damaged the administration and royal revenues, but the king gradually restored them, held parliaments in which he was granted taxes, and might have become a strong adult ruler, had he not felt obliged to help his French ally after the disaster of Crécy by invading England.

The leaders of the army quarrelled before

the march into England. Their aims were uncertain, but on October 17, 1346, outside Durham at Neville's Cross, they were resoundingly defeated by northern English levies.

Many Scottish nobles were killed, some taken prisoner, including the earls of Fife and Menteith.

David fought desperately with an English knight – who was determined not to kill him because of the value of the ransom. He knocked out the Englishman's front teeth before being overpowered. Robert Stewart escaped by fleeing the battle early on.

Carried to the Tower of London, David heard of the execution of Menteith at the orders of Edward III. Fife was also condemned, though later pardoned.

The King of Scots lived as a captive – called simply David Bruce by his brother-in-law – while Scotland fell progressively into anarchy under the slack Guardianship of his uncle and heir, Robert Stewart. It was at this time – 1350 – the country suffered its first visitation of the Black Death.

Robert had no interest in securing David's return. But from 1348 Edward III was gradually persuaded by David that they might do a deal.

In 1351 at Newcastle an outline was agreed. King David (as it now suited Edward to call him) was to return with a 1,000-year truce,

free of ransom, to a kingdom free of English occupation, and would be Edward's ally. Should David die without an heir, he would be succeeded by a younger son of Edward III.

For five months – November 1351 to April 1352 – David was in Scotland on a ticket-of-leave, seeking to persuade his subjects to accept this change in the succession.

But they would not, and he returned to captivity while Scotland returned to disorder.

In 1354 a more limited agreement would have allowed David Bruce to return to Scotland with a truce owing a ransom of £60,000.

But Robert Stewart preferred a deal with the French which left David in captivity.

Only in 1357, after a devastating incursion to Lothian by Edward III, and for £66,666 payable over 10 years, was David ransomed, his title unrecognised and parts of his kingdom still occupied.

His problems? To restore order and revenues and to pay the ransom. A firm hand achieved the former – David was no slouch – and in parliament he was granted taxation and increased duties on exports, which could have met the latter.

But for payment he had little enthusiasm and for five years after 1360 he gave Edward not a penny, incurring penalties which might have led to a renewed war.

Instead he was building up the financial reserves essential to make the wheels of ►



■ The ruins of Turnberry Castle, above, as painted by the Rev John Thomson in 1828. Exactly 500 years earlier, David – only four at the time – took his child bride Joan to live there. In 1329 David became king, with Thomas Randolph, Earl of Moray, as Guardian – the illustration, left, is from the National Portrait Gallery, in Edinburgh.



# A success as a king, but unable to give Scotland an heir

► government turn effectively. Early in 1363 Robert Stewart and others rebelled, alleging that the ransom money was wasted by 'evil advice'. Mustering a paid army and loyal office-bearers, the King ran rings around the rebels, whom Stewart characteristically deserted, and they submitted.

Secure in mastery of his kingdom, in the autumn of 1363 he again went south to negotiate with Edward, apparently seeking the 1351 terms.

He could not get them, and returned with an English proposal that if he had no heir, the succession should go to the king of England.

This was decisively rejected by parliament in March, 1364, and for the rest of David's reign he negotiated to reduce the burden of his ransom – with some success. Alteration of the succession was not raised again.

To many historians his willingness to allow a Plantagenet successor condemns him irredeemably, and makes him an unworthy successor to his incomparable father. That is unfair. He hoped to have a son. He came home in 1357 with a mistress, so poor Queen Joan left him for England in 1358, dying in 1362.

In 1360 his English mistress was assassinated, childless, and he found another, a Scottish widow (who had children), and married her at his time of triumph over the rebels in May 1363. She bore him no children, and in 1369 left him to be divorced in 1370.

By then he had another mistress and planned to marry her at the time of his death.

That he had no child is certain, and that he was probably incapable of procreation is reasonably clear now, but David evidently still had hopes even on his death-bed. He did not want a Plantagenet successor, and if the French had been prepared to pay his ransom, he would not have negotiated with Edward III.

But he did prefer a Plantagenet to Uncle Robert Stewart. Historians in the 19th century, generally so admiring of the United Kingdom,



■ In their prime... David II and his Queen Joan, the sister of Edward III. They were married as children, but she failed to produce an heir and she left for England in 1358 when David took a mistress in a bid to protect his lineage.

appear affronted by David's political flexibility, because the 1363 proposals would have led to union of the kingdoms.

But David suggested succession by a younger son Plantagenet to avoid union. And one suspects that what really offended the historians was the king's somewhat irregular love-life.

One striking feature of his rule over the 14 years, 1357-71, is the centralisation of some functions of government at Edinburgh.

The royal audit and parliaments were still held usually by the Tay – this inconvenienced north and south equally. But David and his council worked hard much of the time at Edinburgh where he had a new tower built, the

oldest building (after St Margaret's chapel) on the Castle Rock. It is inside the Half-Moon Battery and was only rediscovered early in the 20th century.

The powerful men who had stolen royal revenues and bullied royal officials during his captivity found a new master after 1357.

The Lord of the Isles was forced into submission, the Earl of Ross into entailing his lands upon a loyal knight.

The Earl of Angus was imprisoned in 1361, Mar in 1370, the Steward in 1368 and briefly deprived of his earldom in 1369.

David travelled around the lowland parts of his kingdom, not a remote figure to his





■ The Tower of London where David II spent 11 years following his defeat at Neville's Cross.

subjects, holding criminal courts (justice ayres) and sitting with his council to give remedies to those subjects who petitioned him.

He was also a conventional aristocrat, but not besotted with 'chivalry'.

In the autumn of 1363 he fled from the plague in Edinburgh, first to Aberdeen, then to Elgin and Kinloss, and at some point in 1361-62 he had a narrow escape from drowning in a storm in the Firth of Forth, which he marked by building a church to the saint who had delivered him – St Monans Kirk.

He ruled at a time when Edward III devastated first Scotland then France in pursuit of an imperial dream.

David's mistake was not that he became involved in 1346 in supporting France against these pretensions. Scotland had known Edward III's 'chivalry' in 1333-37, and David had found refuge from it in France.

It was surely not ignoble to give help to the French, reeling from defeat, in their time of need. The mistake was the lack of strategy and poor tactics in the giving of it.

He died suddenly, at Edinburgh on February 22, 1371, not quite 47. His successor? Robert Stewart. ●



■ Chateau Gaillard, the French castle where the young David II spent seven years in exile with his English child bride Joan.

## TIMELINE

**1318**

With King Robert Bruce still childless, the Scottish Parliament decides to settle the throne on his grandson Robert Stewart – should there be no natural heir.

**1324**

On March 5, the Queen finally gives birth to twins, David and John. Only David survives and in 1326 is recognised as heir.

**1328**

David now aged 4 is married to Edward III's sister Joan, 7, to seal peace between the nations.

**1329**

On June 7, David becomes King of Scots. Six days later the Pope finally recognises Scotland as an independent nation.

**1331**

Edward III tires of the peace and backs Edward Balliol (right) in his invasion of Scotland.



**1332**

David's Guardian, Donald, Earl of Mar, dies in the Battle of Dupplin. The young King and his Queen flee to France. Balliol is crowned at Scone, but is soon forced to flee the country.

**1346**

David tries to repay the French by invading England, but loses badly at Neville's Cross.

**1357**

David is freed by Edward III after 11 years in the Tower.

**1364**

Balliol – who was a puppet king of Scots until 1356 – dies at his family estates in France.

**1371**

David dies in Edinburgh still childless. He is succeeded by his uncle Robert Stewart.



# Poor neighbours who need the odd beating

There was never any love lost between the Scots and the English, but still they forged a workable Union

■ Shakespeare helped to promote the view that Scots burned with a desire for revenge on the English.

In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia discusses her Scottish and English suitors with her maid. She says of the Scot: "He hath a neighbourly charity in him, for he borrowed a box of the ear of the Englishman and swore he would pay him again when he was able. I think the Frenchman became his surety."

Here Shakespeare alludes to typical English views about the Scots, which had been largely formed during the Wars of Independence.

The Scots were considered to be poor neighbours, whose obtuseness merited an occasional beating. They consequently burned with a desire for revenge, hopefully with French help – Shakespeare is referring to the Auld Alliance.

Such views became standard in England down to the 16th century. Persistent English hostility stemmed above all from the consequences of the policies pursued by the English Crown towards Scotland.

Edward III (1327 to 1377) abandoned his grandfather Edward I's policy of trying to attach Scotland to England as a subsidiary lordship – a mere appendage, instead of a kingdom in its own right. He eventually developed harmonious relations with Robert I's son, David II.

But Edward III and his successors steadfastly maintained the claim to be overlords of Scotland, and perpetuated simmering conflict by imposing direct rule in strategic Scottish locations, most lengthily over some Border burghs.

Scots could not abide seeing the flag of St George flying anywhere in their land, and accepted English allegiance only when necessary. Consequently, in English eyes they came to be seen as incorrigibly faithless.

It was an affront and an indication of a malicious streak in the Scots that they and their kings refused to recognise their 'natural' lord, the king of England. Henry IV, trying to win the Scots to his allegiance, when he was with his army in what is now Leith Walk in 1400, cringingly proclaimed that he was half-Scots by descent.

Edinburgh folk told him in no uncertain terms what they thought of that. What particularly hurt and outraged the English about the Scottish attitude was that they regarded many Scots as more like themselves than any other of the non-English inhabitants of the British Isles.

They saw Lowland knights and burgesses as pale mirror-images of themselves – 'tame' Scots, as one 14th-century English poet described them (in contrast to 'wild' Scots Highlanders). English nobles



■ Henry IV claimed to be Scottish by descent.

acknowledged that their Lowland counterparts had a chivalrous military code, a cult of courtly love, and an elaborate lifestyle like their own.

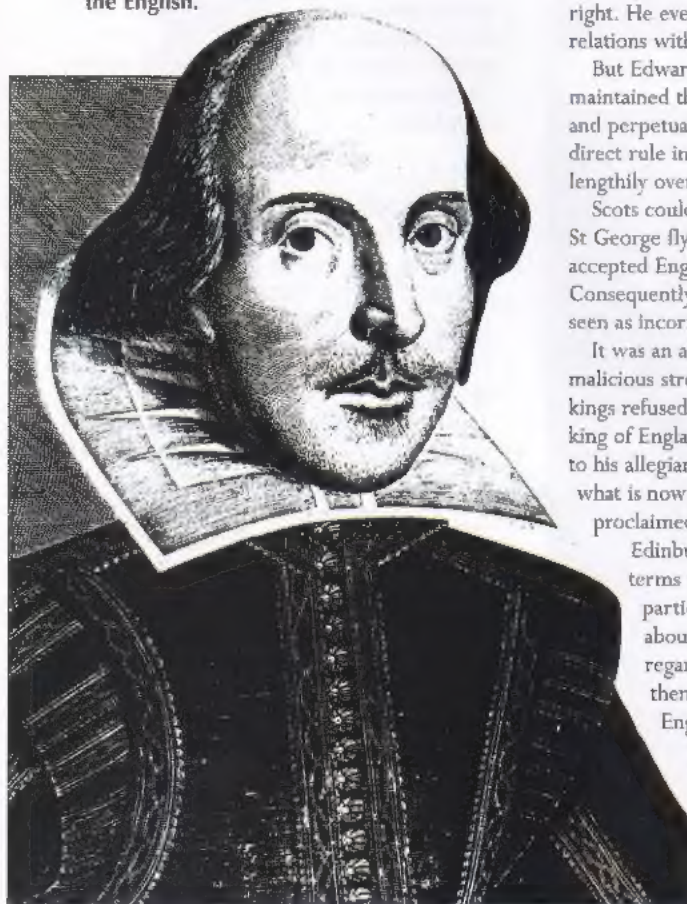
This recognition was reflected in the ballad *Chevy Chase*, which had become popular in English taverns by Shakespeare's time. It is about the bloody Scottish victory at Otterburn in Northumberland in 1388, and it is likely that the earliest version had been composed and sung in the region soon after the battle.

The Scottish commander, the young Earl of Douglas, was killed and his English opponent, Sir Henry Percy (Hotspur), was captured. The ballad is notable for its even-handed treatment of both sides – identical in their dedication to ferocious and honourable combat.

How frustrating for the English that the typical valiant Scottish knight so deplorably rejected the claims of the English Crown!

Sir John Swinton, from Swinton in Berwickshire, was one of the most trusted knights of Edward III's son, John of Gaunt – proudly wearing his master's badge when Gaunt was unpopular, whereas his English servants concealed theirs.

As a consequence, Swinton was dragged from his horse by a London mob, and saved only by the intervention of the Mayor. But none of Swinton's English friends doubted where his prime allegiance lay. He was to die fighting the English







■ Edward III claimed to be the overlord of Scotland, and so helped to prolong the mutual enmity.

during a Scottish invasion of Northumberland in 1402.

However, in 1603 the English accepted the rule of a Scottish king and the Union of the Crowns in the person of James VI and I. Mutual distrust had declined in the second half of the 16th century. Many Scots and English felt that they had a common cause in the Reformation.

Scottish reformers found refuge from Catholic persecution in Protestant England. When events turned in their favour in Scotland, they returned home with translations of the Bible in English. John Knox, it was alleged, had acquired an English accent.

For Protestant English folk in Queen Elizabeth's reign, threats from the old enemy were overshadowed by the menaces of scheming Popes and Jesuits, and of the might of Spain.

The tenuous new Anglo-Scottish rapport survived a hard test – the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1587. Her son's accession to the English throne was to be welcomed for the same reason as his mother's execution had been – it promised to secure the survival of the Protestant succession in England.

The Union of the Crowns was potentially a good deal for England in a number of ways. There would no longer be the need to maintain a costly defence system in the Borders, and the baleful

activities of the Border reivers could at last be curbed.

Scottish military prowess could be expected to augment rather than detract from English military power. The ancient bone of contention, the matter of the English claim to sovereignty, could be assigned to musty academic discourse.

The old, ingrained English opinions of Scotland, as well as the newer ones, helped to make the Union acceptable to the English, and to shape the ways in which they envisaged it would operate.

In this context, *MacBeth* – the new play performed before James VI and I at Hampton Court Palace in 1606 – is instructive.

Shakespeare projected the world of King James's remote Scottish ancestors as one in which high moral dramas were enacted.

This was not a barbarous and primitive Scotland, but a world worthy of comparison in its history with that of King Arthur and other ancient heroes revered by the English.

But in the play it is the English who help Malcolm to bring Birnam Wood to Dunsinane, and to restore the moral order in Scotland by the destruction of *MacBeth*.

The play reflects the English sense that England was Scotland's righteous big brother.

This historic sense of superiority helps to explain why there were no English fears that the

Union would lead to a Scottish takeover, as the English themselves had tried in the past to take over their more powerful neighbour, France.

Traditional English views that attempts to take over Scotland were not worth the huge effort involved help to explain why the Union failed to arouse English ambitions to meddle in Scottish affairs under King James.

In the prevailing circumstances such efforts would have required a closer Union, for which James pushed in vain against the opposition of English parliaments.

They were suspicious of his plans to create a newfangled hybrid, the monarchy of Great Britain.

They were reluctant to allow Scots the same rights as natural-born Englishmen. They would have liked the Scots kept outside the railings of England's blessed land, grateful for a few crumbs thrown to them.

If admitted at all it would be on sufferance, to do only menial tasks.

Nevertheless, the English had to accept (with ill grace) James's reward of Scottish nobles and courtiers with grants of English offices and the keeping of English estates.

As a result of this, and intermarriage, a British ruling class started to form.

In a lukewarm fashion, the English began to develop a new interest in contemporary Scotland. Some English travellers went north of the Border out of curiosity, and found a market in England for their picturesque accounts.

Rather like some foreign visitors to Britain today, they depicted Scotland as old-fashioned in its ways, and lacking in modern amenities. Waste disposal in 'Auld Reekie' had a horrid fascination for them.

It is, indeed, remarkable that the Union of Crowns held firm and worked well under King James. Closer acquaintance with Scots did not make them better liked by the English.

Generally, in English eyes they remained a less appealing version of themselves, and were characterised as dowdy, unsophisticated and outlandish in diction.

Yet traditional English perceptions of Scotland, together with pressing English necessities, were the forces which made the Union work in the early 17th century.

The English thought that the best way to treat their Scottish bedfellows was to roll away from them and cling on to the bolster.

In some circumstances, the mutual enmity and wariness of nations yoked together by geography, can produce workable joint institutions. ●





■ Mary, Queen of Scots, is interred at Westminster Abbey, along with many later Scots rulers.

# Here (and there) lies our royalty

**Westminster Abbey is the last resting place of Mary, Queen of Scots. But Scotland's other kings and queens lie as far apart as Iona and the Vatican**

**I**t is hard to visit Westminster Abbey in London and see the phalanxes of tombs, the last resting places of most of England's kings and queens, without wondering where were all the rulers of Scotland are buried?

Our earlier kings were buried in Iona – no fewer than 48 of them. But what of the rest? It requires extensive travel over the length and breadth of Scotland's landscape, to amass the knowledge of where most of the others lie. They are scattered all over this little country, and in some cases further afield. The good news is that many of the burial sites can still be visited.

The last king of Scots to be buried on Iona was Donald III. He was interred first at Dunkeld, but was later moved to Iona sometime before 1150.

Malcolm Canmore and his wife, the later St Margaret, were buried at Dunfermline Abbey, but at the Reformation their remains were removed to the Escorial in Madrid, were they supposedly still remain. Three of their sons were to become kings, and all are buried at Dunfermline – Edgar, Alexander I (and his queen, Sibylla) and David I (and his two queens).

Next to mount the throne was David I's grandson Malcolm IV, or as he is better known, Malcolm the Maiden. When Malcolm died in 1165, he too was buried at Dunfermline. His brother, William the Lion, then ruled in Scotland, and when he died in 1214, he was buried under the high altar of the magnificent abbey he had constructed at Arbroath. A modern grave slab marks his last resting place. His wife, Queen Ermengarde, is buried at Balmerino Abbey in Fife.

His successor, Alexander II, died on the Island of Kerrera in 1249, and was taken all the way to the Borders to be buried at Melrose Abbey. Although there now seems to be no marker, a polished limestone slab beside the high altar was still pointed out as his gravestone in the 1800s.

His son, Alexander III, died on the beach at Kinghorn in Fife when he fell from his horse in 1286. A monument beside the A92 marks the spot. Alexander was interred in Dunfermline Abbey, beside the body of his queen Margaret, and his two sons who had predeceased him, the princes David and Alexander.

Next in line was Alexander III's little granddaughter, the tragic Margaret the Maid of Norway. She died in Orkney at the age of seven, before she had a chance to reign over her





■ No fewer than 48 of Scotland's earlier monarchs were buried on the holy island of Iona. The rest are scattered all over the country – and abroad.

kingdom. She was buried at Bergen Cathedral in Norway, and although this building has gone, an inscribed pillar marks her last resting place.

Scotland's next monarch, John Balliol, was to die in exile in 1315 in France, probably at his estate in Picardy in the north of the country. As France did not suffer the Reformation which caused the destruction of so many ancient tombs in Scotland, perhaps his tomb still stands neglected and forgotten, in some old French church. His son, Edward Balliol, also ruled for a while in Scotland, as an English puppet-king, and like his father, his last resting place is currently unknown.

John Balliol's successor was the mighty Bruce, victor of Bannockburn. Bruce died at his house on the River Leven, north of Dumbarton, in 1329, and was buried at Dunfermline beside his queen, Elizabeth. All of him, that is, apart from his heart, which is buried at Melrose Abbey, a modern stone marking the spot.

Bruce's tomb was destroyed at the Reformation, but was rediscovered during building work, and he was re-interred in 1819. A brass plaque marks his last resting place under the abbey's high altar. The rest of the royals buried here would seem to be under the floor, where the abbey shop now stands. Unfortunately, Bruce's tomb is the only one whose whereabouts is known with any certainty. Dunfermline also saw the burial of one of Bruce's daughters, the

Princess Matilda. His eldest daughter, Marjory, died in Paisley, where a cairn now marks the spot, and her tomb still stands in Paisley Abbey.

Bruce's son David II of Scotland died in 1371, and was buried within the walls of Holyrood Abbey, the ruins of which stand next to the palace of the same name at the foot of Edinburgh's Royal Mile. His successor Robert II died at Dundonald Castle in Ayrshire in 1390, but his body was carried north and buried at the now vanished abbey by the Moot Hill at Scone. Unfortunately there is nothing here to mark the site of his grave. Both of his queens, Elizabeth Mure and Euphemia Ross, were buried in Paisley Abbey.

The next king of Scots, Robert III, died in 1406 in Rothesay Castle and, like his mother, was buried in Paisley Abbey. A new gravestone was erected over his tomb in 1888, carved from Sicilian marble. It stands within the choir of the abbey. Robert III's queen, Ennoble Drummed, was buried at Dunfermline Abbey – the last royal to be buried there.

James I was stabbed to death in 1437 trying to fight off assailants at the Carthusian Monastery in Perth. He was buried within this building. The Carthusian monastery has long gone, but an inscribed pillar marks the spot, standing in front of James VI's hospital just off the town's York Place.

James II was killed in 1460, by an exploding cannon at the siege of Roxburgh Castle. He was buried in Holyrood Abbey in Edinburgh. His queen, Mary of Gueldres, was buried in the Trinity College Church, on the west side of Leith Wynd. Although later churches have borne the same name, when the original was demolished she was transferred to the burial vault at Holyrood.

James II had the strange honour of having been born, crowned, married and buried all within the same building. James III was killed after the battle of Sauchieburn in 1488. He was buried at Cambuskenneth Abbey, across the Forth from Stirling. His queen, Margaret of Denmark, was buried beside him. This tomb was rediscovered in 1865 and a new stone monument was erected over it. It stands on the site of the abbey's high altar, and is today surrounded by a protective

railing. Their son James IV met his end on the battlefield of Flodden in 1513, dying with many thousands of his fellow-countrymen. James's body, found the day after the battle, was embalmed and spent time at several locations in England, in the ignominious role of conversation piece. It was eventually thrown into a mass grave at the Church of St Michael's in London's Wood Street. This church was demolished at the turn of the 20th century and a modern building now stands on the site, owned by Standard Life of Edinburgh. There is no commemoration marker to James's memory. His queen, Margaret, was buried in the Carthusian Monastery in Perth, the last resting place of James I. Their son, James V, died at Falkland Palace in 1542, and was buried in Holyrood Abbey. His queen, Mary of Guise, was also interred at Holyrood.

James's daughter was the ill-fated Mary, Queen of Scots. After her first husband the Dauphin of France, died in 1560, she returned to Scotland. She was married twice more in Scotland, first to Darnley who was buried in Holyrood Abbey, and secondly to Bothwell. The latter was to eventually die a madman, chained to a wall in a castle in Denmark. His mummified body is there still, displayed as a tourists attraction in the crypt of Faarevejle church near Drogsholm.

Mary, as everyone knows, was beheaded. This evil deed took place at Fotheringhay Castle, and Mary was first buried for 25 years at Peterborough Cathedral where a tablet is mounted on a pillar in remembrance. She was later interred in Westminster Abbey, where she still lies, a sign stating that she was beheaded for treason – an impossibility, of course, as one monarch cannot be guilty of treason against another.

Her son, James VI of Scotland and later James I of England, is also buried in Westminster Abbey, as has been every monarch since, apart from the exiled James VIII. He is buried at the Vatican in Rome with his two sons, Charles Edward – or Bonnie Prince Charlie – and Henry Benedict.

A visit to some of these graves can be very intriguing. After all, they hold all that remains of people who were the most powerful of their particular age. ●



■ Robert III's last resting place – Paisley Abbey.





■ A 16th century illustration of Edinburgh Castle, where David II died in 1371.

**Without a Bruce, the crown of Scotland passed to Robert the Steward – then to his son Robert – so beginning the surprisingly durable dynasty of the Stewarts**

# The 'weak' kings who began our strongest royal line

When David II, son of the hero-king Robert Bruce, died in Edinburgh Castle in February 1371, he left no heirs, despite a series of marriages and romantic liaisons. He was succeeded on the throne by his nephew Robert the Steward, the son of the great west coast magnate Walter the Steward and Robert I's daughter Marjory Bruce.

Unlike the short-lived Bruce line, the dynasty founded by Robert would prove to be remarkably durable. Stewart monarchs would dominate the Scottish and, latterly, the English kingdoms until the late 17th century. Despite their role in the establishment of Medieval and early modern Scotland's most long-lasting and influential dynasty, however, the historical reputations of Robert II and his son Robert III have traditionally been poor.

Both men have been characterised as weak and ineffective kings who allowed the dissipation of royal authority and resources, and who were unable to control and discipline their own Stewart kinsmen, let alone the other great magnates of the realm.

The image of the degeneration of the royal house under the early Stewart kings was sharpened by the fame of Robert I, who was held up as a model of heroic military leadership and dynamic kingship.

Is this view fair? The decade after Robert II's accession to the throne was, in fact, notable for the relative political stability and peace achieved by the new king. One of the factors contributing to the solidity of the new regime was Robert's personal approach to government. Robert came

to the throne relatively late in life (he was 55 at the time of his coronation) supported by a large circle of relatives, including adult sons and sons-in-law.

As king, Robert used his kinsmen, especially his three adult sons, and the extension of his network of marriage alliances to consolidate his personal power in the localities and to establish the new dynasty. Robert's two eldest sons John, Earl of Carrick (the future Robert III), and Robert, Earl of Fife, became active figures in the royal administration and custodians of the major royal castles of Edinburgh and Stirling, while Robert's third son, Alexander, Lord of Badenoch – the notorious Wolf of Badenoch – acted as the king's lieutenant in the north of the kingdom.

The aggrandisement of the king's family was not as disruptive and contentious as has sometimes been thought, largely because Robert ensured that individuals who lost offices or titles to the king's sons were compensated from royal resources. Moreover, the king did not attempt to undermine the power of established aristocrats in their own areas, preferring instead to tie them to the royal dynasty through marriage alliances. Through his daughters-in-law, both before and after he became king, Robert II established personal and political links with the most important of the kingdom's noblemen.

Robert's kingship was also well placed in financial terms. The royal household had to make fewer demands on the public resources of the kingdom because Robert and his family could live off, and draw substantial revenues from, the ancestral Stewart lordships and estates which had



been accumulated before 1371. This, combined with a boom in Scottish wool exports in the 1370s, allowed the king to dispense his patronage as liberally and generously, as was noted by near-contemporary Scottish chroniclers.

In fact, the only critical contemporary account of Robert's kingship is provided by the continental chronicler Jean Froissart. Outlining the conduct of Anglo-Scottish warfare in 1385, Froissart describes the then 69-year-old king as having 'bleared eyes, of the colour of sandal wood, which clearly showed that he was no valiant man, but one who would rather remain at home than march to the field'.

The characterisation of Robert II in 1385 as a weak and cowardly figure, ignored by his own well-gentle magnates who conducted border warfare regardless of the king's wishes, had a profound effect on the king's historical reputation. Yet Froissart's account was really derived from political propaganda produced to justify the appointment of the king's eldest son, the Earl of Carrick, as Guardian of the Kingdom in 1384. In contrast, the descriptions of the king's character and achievements provided by an anonymous Scottish chronicler of the 1390s are more positive, emphasising that Robert's reign saw the recovery of lands and castles in the Borders which had been in English hands since the 1350s.

Moreover, far from being overawed and belittled by the legacy of his grandfather as a paragon of martial values, Robert II played a major part in celebrating and enhancing the Bruce legend. It was Robert II who encouraged and rewarded John Barbour for the production of his great verse epic, *The Bruce*, and there seems little doubt that the Stewart king portrayed himself as the heir and protector not only of his grandfather's kingdom, but also his virtues and attitudes.

Overall, the combination of financial security, non-confrontational domestic politics, and the promotion of patriotic unity underpinned a reign which seems to have been both popular and effective until the mid-1380s. After that, however, a number of contentious issues began to undermine Robert's hold on power. The king's failure to respond to repeated complaints about the behaviour of his son Alexander, lord of Badenoch, as royal lieutenant in the north of the kingdom, generated discontent. The king's heir, John, Earl of Carrick, meanwhile grew impatient with his long-lived father's domination of royal government, and cultivated the support of barons from the south of Scotland who broadly supported an intensification of war with England.

The political balance within the kingdom was decisively altered by the death of the most powerful Borders lord - William, first Earl of Douglas - early in 1384. William's successor James, was Carrick's brother-in-law and ally, and a young man noted for his belligerent attitude toward the English. Late in 1384 Carrick seems to have organised a palace coup against his father which resulted in the earl being appointed as Guardian of the Kingdom.

Carrick's hold on power was short-lived. Before December, 1388, the heir to the throne was incapacitated by a kick from a horse, while



■ Robert II was characterised as weak and cowardly, but that was not entirely fair.



'There was strife and bawling among the leading men, because the king had no grip anywhere'

► the death or capture of many of Carrick's principal supporters at the battle of Otterburn in August, 1388, allowed a counter coup to be mounted against the Guardian in Robert II's name by the king's second son Robert, earl of Fife and Menteith – who replaced Carrick as Guardian in December, 1388

Fife was a notably active Guardian in both military and administrative affairs and Robert II seems to have remained in semi-retirement until his death in April, 1390, at Dundonald Castle in Ayrshire

After Robert II's death, the crown passed to his eldest son John, Earl of Carrick, who became king as Robert III, having decided to abandon a Christian name which had an unhappy history as a royal epithet in the reigns of John Balliol, John I and II of France, and King John of England. The name change also avoided raising the tricky question of whether John Balliol (whose claim to the throne had been consistently denigrated by Bruce/Stewart apologists during the 14th century) should be accorded the status of the first king of Scots to bear that name.

Robert III's reign has been seen as representing the nadir of Scottish kingship in the late Medieval period. The circle of powerful 'quasi-royal' Stewart earls and lords established by Robert II appeared to be beyond the control of the weak and incapacitated king.

The new monarch's age – he was 50 when became king – his physical afflictions, his political humiliation in 1388 and the influence of Robert, Earl of Fife, in royal government limited his ability to recover and enhance his personal authority. Moreover, Robert's accession to the throne coincided with a profound economic downturn and a currency crisis which saw a sharp devaluation of Scottish coinage.

These factors restricted the ability of the king to recover his authority through the use of financial patronage, while conversely they increased aristocratic competition over access to the remaining royal customs revenues. The unrestrained ambitions of the king's brothers and magnates such as the earls of Douglas and the Lords of the Isles were said to have promoted political unrest, violence and instability.

The chronicler Walter Bower, writing in the



■ Reconstruction of Dundonald Castle: Robert II was in semi-retirement here until his death in 1390.

1440s, could claim that in Robert's time there was 'a great deal of dissension, strife and bawling among the magnates and the leading men, because the king, being bodily infirm, had no grip anywhere'.

The picture of domestic disorder was unrelieved by success in the diplomatic and military sphere, for Robert's reign saw a humiliating defeat of a major Scottish army at the hands of English forces at the battle of Humbleton in 1402 – a conflict which ended with the death or capture of scores of prominent Scottish noblemen.

The gloomy estimation of King Robert's personal infirmity and inability to act as a dynamic and forceful monarch should not be doubted. For 10 of the 16 years of his reign, royal authority was exercised by guardians or lieutenants appointed by parliaments or general councils because the king was deemed incapable of governing the kingdom.

The fate of Robert III's sons, moreover, seemed to suggest that the impotence of the royal line in the face of the entrenched power of the cadet branches of the Stewart family and other regional magnates was in danger of extending beyond the lifetime of Robert III.

Robert's eldest son David, Duke of Rothesay, was appointed as Lieutenant of the Kingdom for his father in 1399. In 1401-2, however, Rothesay was arrested by his uncle Robert, Earl of Fife (by that

stage Duke of Albany) and died in March, 1402, in Albany's Fife castle – located next to the later Falkland Palace – in suspicious circumstances.

In 1406, worries about the declining health of King Robert contributed to his decision to send his sole remaining son and heir, James, secretly to France. The attempt to transfer James to the custody of the French king indicates that the ailing King Robert and his advisers were unwilling to let the young heir to the throne fall into the hands of his likely guardian, the Duke





## TIMELINE

**1371**

Robert Stewart, grandson of Robert Bruce succeeds David II, launching Scotland's greatest royal dynasty.

**1384**

John, Earl of Carrick – later to become Robert III – launches a campaign against his ailing father and becomes Guardian.

**1388**

Carrick is crippled after being kicked by a horse, and the Guardianship is passed to his brother Robert, Earl of Fife.

**1390**

Robert II dies at Dundonald Castle and is succeeded by his elder son John, former Earl of Carrick. The new king changes his name to Robert.

**1399**

Robert III's ill-health and weak leadership results in his elder son David, Duke of Rothesay being appointed Lieutenant of the Kingdom for his father.

**1401**

Rothesay taken prisoner by his uncle Robert, Duke of Albany, and dies in Falkland Castle in suspicious circumstances.

**1406**

March 22: Robert III's remaining son James is captured by pirates while fleeing to France, and is held by England's Henry IV.

**1406**

April 4: Robert III dies in Rothesay Castle, below, apparently of a broken heart after hearing of his son's captivity.



■ Unfortunate timing: Robert III's accession to the throne coincided with an economic downturn.

of Albany, after the king's death. But the plan to remove James from Scotland misfired badly.

On March 22 the heir to the throne was captured at sea by English pirates and was thereafter delivered into the custody of Henry IV of England. On April 4, shortly after hearing news of his son's capture, Robert III died in Rothesay Castle on the Isle of Bute.

The chronicler Bower asserts that the king died of a broken heart on hearing the news of his son's capture: "He was moved inwardly in his heart on

hearing the messenger, his spirit failed directly, the strength of his body dwindled, his face grew pale, and in his grief he ate no more food until he breathed out his spirit to his creator."

He was buried in Paisley Abbey. Despite the problems of Robert's reign, however, it would be wrong to suggest that Scottish kingship experienced an irreversible institutional crisis or that the political unity of the kingdom was in some way jeopardised. The prolonged and repeated guardianships point to the personal ineffectiveness of the king and the growing ability of great lords such as Albany and Douglas to overshadow and sideline the monarch.

Yet, in theory at least, guardians were only appointed to preserve the unity, administration and institutions of the realm in the absence of a king capable of discharging his duties.

Support and sympathy for the 'ideal' of a legitimate, capable adult king ruling in co-operation with his estates remained widespread.

These sentiments helped James I, on his eventual release from English captivity in 1424, to impose an energetic, aggressive and ruthless style of governance on his kingdom which effectively re-established the political dominance of the Stewart kings. ●

■ Falkland Palace in Fife: where in the nearby castle David, Duke of Rothesay, died in suspicious circumstances.






# Fire-breathing



■ An imaginary 19th-century depiction of the destruction of Elgin Cathedral by the Wolf of Badenoch.



# Wolf



As the king's son, he felt above the law and made many enemies in his violent pursuit of power. But in the end Alexander Stewart's worst enemy was himself

**L**ate 14th century Scotland was a land of men on the make – but few earned a blacker reputation than Alexander Stewart, third surviving son of King Robert II, and better known as the Wolf of Badenoch

Made infamous by the tide of devastation which he unleashed on Moray in 1390, Alexander has long been portrayed as the archetype of the Highland robber baron, or a man who thought his royal blood put him beyond the law

But the reality is more complex, for his violent assault on the Moray lowlands was part of a bloody game played for the highest of stakes – the mastery of Scotland

King Robert, who had five living sons to provide for, had granted to Alexander his favourite – the lordship of Badenoch. To this he added the royal lieutenancy in the North, the sheriffship of Inverness and, finally, the supreme legal office in the kingdom, the justiciarship north of Forth

Robert's ambition for his son did not stop there. In 1382 the king arranged Alexander's marriage to Euphemia, Countess of Ross, thus placing in his hands Ross, Skye and estates scattered from Nairn to Buchan. Alexander's power in the North seemed absolute.

As an outsider, Alexander needed muscle to underpin this position – for, despite his titles, he lacked both the landed resources and the local kinship ties which traditionally gave substance to power. He sought instead a military solution and settled members of West Highland kindreds, such as the Mackintoshes, on his estates to give weight to his ambitions

These incomers did not support themselves through farming, they were ceatharn' – the infamous Highland caterans of later tradition who were quartered on the land and provided with food and lodgings by their new lord's tenants

With his resources strained to the limit under this burden, he cast hungry eyes on his neighbours' lands. It was easy to let his men find other prey on which to support themselves. Soon they were plundering the property of Alexander Bur and John Dunbar, respectively Bishop and Earl of Moray, lifting cattle and ►



# With his wife alienated by his refusal to abandon his mistress, the loveless marriage was his undoing

## ► extorting 'blackmail' protection money

Bur sought justice at the king's court but, sheltering behind his father, Alexander escaped censure and the bishop was forced into a humiliating climbdown. To win respite from the caterans, Bur gave him the lease of valuable estates and agreed to pay Alexander protection money.

Alexander's success drew jealous eyes, not least among his brothers. The most ambitious of these, Robert, Earl of Fife, also dreamed of Highland lordship and used his influence at court to undermine Alexander at every turn.

Of course, Alexander's high handed methods and cynical misuse of power had won him many enemies in the North. Men such as Bur and Dunbar proved willing allies in Fife's schemes. Another bitter enemy was his wife, Euphemia, alienated by Alexander's refusal to abandon his mistress from his bachelor days, by whom he had several children.

The marriage had been loveless, arranged to give the king's favourite son an earl's title and wide lands in the North, but it was to prove his undoing. At the end of 1388, Fife began to move

against his brother. First, he used his control of royal government to strip Alexander of the justiciarship, granting it instead to his own son, Murdoch. Attacks on Alexander's property rights followed, eroding away his landed base.

Bur and Dunbar were encouraged to join forces against him, the bishop renouncing his blackmail deal with Alexander and turning instead to Dunbar's son for protection.

Finally, with Fife's support, Euphemia sought to recover her property – which Alexander had been denying her – and denounced her marriage as a sham in a court presided over by Bur. Divorce, which would strip Alexander of the Ross lands and be a galling, public humiliation, loomed.

Bitter though these blows were, the Wolf still had teeth and was determined to restore his battered mastery of the Highlands. His father's death in April, 1390, gave him even more cause to fight back, for the prize now was control of government in the name of his invalid eldest brother, Robert III, a prize which Fife was manoeuvring to win.

If he moved decisively, Alexander could

avenge himself against his local enemies and destroy Fife's dominance. In late May, his caterans descended on lowland Moray in an orgy of looting and destruction, targeting the lands and possessions of Fife's supporters, chiefly Bur and Dunbar.

Often portrayed as the acts of a man who knew of no other response than blind violence, the raids, though violent, were far from blind. Each target was carefully selected for its symbolic value. Forres, the second burgh of the earldom, was sacked, with its church, the prebend of the archdeacon of Moray, burned. But the greater prize was Elgin, nominally the earl's chief seat and symbolic heart of his power.

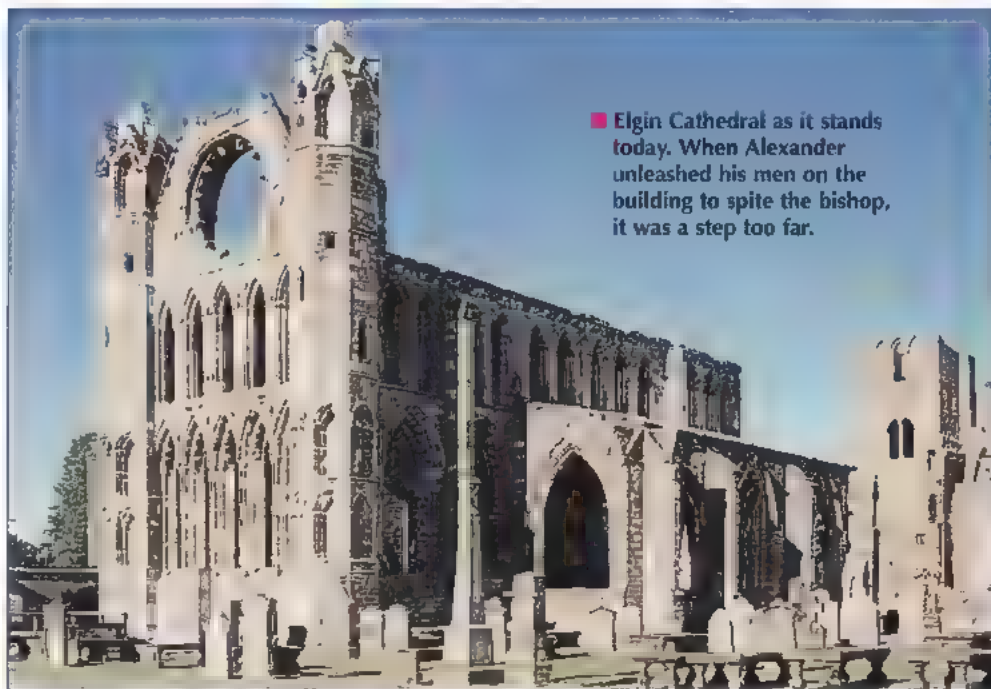
Alexander and his caterans pillaged the burgh, burning the Maison Dieu, whose master was Dunbar's son, and the parish church, whose revenues went into Bur's coffers. Then, in a demonstration of his contempt for the bishop, he unleashed his men on the cathedral, ransacking the magnificent building and giving it to the flames.

It was, however, a step too far, for Fife capitalised on the horror and revulsion of the political community at this sacrilege to tighten his grip on power. Excommunicated by the Church and deserted by his allies, Alexander bowed to the inevitable and submitted.

Despite his failure to realise his dreams in 1390, Alexander remained a potent force and continued to disregard the law in his pursuit of power. Even divorce from Euphemia in 1392 and the loss of her lands seems simply to have hardened him in his determination and, for a few more years, he continued to unleash his caterans on his neighbours and rivals with a fury that threatened to undermine Fife's efforts to secure a regime in the North.

In the end, though, the Wolf sought compromise and accommodation, dying in 1405 at peace with the Church and his family. But his quiet last years could not redeem his reputation.

That had been ruined beyond salvage in the fire and blood of Elgin. ●



■ Elgin Cathedral as it stands today. When Alexander unleashed his men on the building to spite the bishop, it was a step too far.

■ Finally at peace with the Church but still a hated figure: the effigy of Earl Alexander Stewart, the 'Wolf of Badenoch', in Dunkeld Cathedral.







■ Doomed: The jaws of Hell swallow victims of the plague struck down too suddenly to receive the last rites from their priest.

# The waves of death





■ Those not affected recoiled from plague victims, but others risked their lives to help them (above, a Roslin Chapel carving of nurses tending the sick).

**Though Scotland's weather saved its people from the worst ravages of scourges like the Black Death, the prevailing terror was measurable by the fact that dying parents would not be visited by their fearful offspring**

For more than three centuries, from 1349 onwards, Scotland was visited by successive waves of plague that swept Europe. Starting with the dreadful scourge called the Black Death, these rampant diseases ravaged the population of the affected countries.

Throughout Europe, the first wave of plague killed more than a quarter of the population and, through later outbreaks over the following century, it is estimated that Europe's population was halved.

For a variety of reasons, Scotland was less affected than many nations. In fact, because the Black Death first hit our neighbouring country to the south, the Scots named it 'the foul death of England' which was unfair, considering that most of these outbreaks originated in Asia.

But England was severely hit, with its death toll throwing its farming economy into chaos, while in London the worst outbreak was not to come until 1665 – when victims died by the tens of thousands.

In Scotland, with a population of around one million, about one-sixth of the people were wiped out in the first attack while the following outbreaks of disease hung as a threat over many generations.

The killer illnesses involved were bubonic plague and pneumonic plague. The first was spread by the fleas carried on rats, which were numerous in the unsanitary living conditions of the Middle Ages.

The infected rodents could move from country to country in loads of exported foodstuffs,

particularly grain. A human coming into contact with the infected fleas would develop a fever, followed by chills and a swelling of the lymph glands in armpit and groin.

Without the benefit of modern medicine, the death rate of infected people was about 70 per cent.

But even survivors were regarded with fear and suspicion. A contemporary writer called it

*'a strange and unwanted kind of death, as the flesh of the sick was somehow puffed out and swollen, and they dragged out their earthly life for barely two days'.*

The even deadlier pneumonic plague occurred when these germs attacked victims who were also suffering from diseases of the lung. Sadly, pneumonia was not uncommon in those centuries, and this variety of the plague brought almost certain death. It could be easily



■ Insult to injury: Medieval artists cruelly drew plague victims as grotesque figures.



# Those who dared to risk their lives by selflessly tending to the sick were regarded with awe

transmitted by sneezing, and this is still recalled in this darkly ominous nursery rhyme

*Ring a ring o' roses,  
A pocket full of posies:  
Atishoo, atishoo,  
We all fall down.*

As the outbreaks continued through the 15th century, even the royal tax collectors changed their travel arrangements to avoid infected areas

An edict of 1431 said they would collect taxes on the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin at Perth 'provided the pestilence be not there, and if it is there, at St Andrews'

It was reported that people were so frightened of disease that wild fears and superstitions took root

*'A total eclipse of the sun, which occurred on the 17th of June, 1432, increased these terrors, the obscuration beginning at three in the afternoon and for half an hour causing a darkness as deep as midnight. It was long remembered in Scotland by the name of the Black Hour'*

Several attacks of plague were recorded in 16th-century Edinburgh, where overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions were as rife as in any city

The magistrates took drastic steps to curb the menace, and all citizens who had been infected but had recovered were ordered to carry a white wand and have a white patch sewn on to their clothing for 40 days afterwards that other clean folk may eschew them

The penalty for breaking this law was death. Citizens who tried to conceal the disease were branded with a hot iron and banished

A man who concealed his wife's sickness from the plague in 1530 was ordered to be hanged immediately at his own front door. But luckily for him the rope broke, the gibbet collapsed, and he was allowed 'for pity' to take his family of bairns into exile

The plague hit out miserably at sinners and holy people. In fact, most of the canons of St Andrews Cathedral were wiped out by the



■ Contemporary sketches show how the plague could wipe out adults, children and animals alike.

Black Death in 1349. In England, more than half of the priests in Yorkshire and two-thirds of those in the diocese of Norwich succumbed

Yet still people believed that this was a punishment brought by God and that the greatest fear was that they would perish but not be able to receive the last rites of the church. That would mean an eternal damnation

The 15th-century Scottish master poet Robert Henryson lamented:

*'That we should be thus be hastily put down,  
And die as beasts without confession'*

This terrible way of death was so feared that, according to chroniclers, people were even sent away from their parents as they died of the disease, 'fleeing as from the face of leprosy or from an adder'

Those who dared to risk their lives by tending to the sick were regarded with awe, and there is a carving at Roslin Chapel, near Edinburgh, which shows nurses going about this selfless duty

However, the death toll in Scotland may have been lighter than elsewhere because the type of rat that harboured the bubonic plague-carrying fleas normally thrived in warmer climates.

Though our colder weather would

serve to encourage pneumonia, plague's victims would die more quickly, so they had much chance to spread the infection

It also seems that these outbreaks were less severe in the Scottish Highlands, so that there the pressure of expanding population was not eased to the extent that it was in the rest of the country. For this was the sole benefit that this awful and long drawn-out catastrophe brought to those who escaped it.

Following the Black Death of 1349, and for the following three centuries, population pressure became less acute than it might have been in the southern parts of Scotland

In the rural areas, this meant that more land was available for farming by fewer people. So there and in the cities and towns, food became more plentiful, rents would drop, and a labour shortage would push up earnings

Before the coming of the plague, the average peasant would have up to 20 acres on which to grow crops to sustain the family and offer any surplus for sale. But only 20 years after the first wave of the Black Death, this average land-holding had more than doubled

Life had become just a little easier for some but at a price that traumatised generations. ●





# The Great Hall gets



**It was created by James IV to rival the courts of the kings of England and France. But it sank from glory to neglect before again becoming the pride of Stirling Castle**

**T**he dawn of a new millennium may only have been a month away but, as the Queen entered the Great Hall at Stirling Castle on November 30, 1999, she could have been forgiven for thinking she had just stepped 500 years back in time.

And that's how it was meant to be. The room before her appeared exactly as it would have done when King James IV – of whom she is a direct 15th-generation descendant – presided over the opening of the largest hall in his kingdom around 1503.

A truly awesome sight, the Great Hall would have been central in James IV's quest to create a royal court of the highest European standing and, in so doing, emulate his contemporaries, King Louis XII of France and England's King Henry VII.

James IV was the true architect of a glorious period for Scotland's Stewart dynasty. Inspired by the sentiments of the Italian Renaissance, his reign was dominated by a programme of palace building in all the principal royal residences of his kingdom.

His two favourites were at Edinburgh and Stirling where the chief royal enclave was a rectangular courtyard situated behind strong fortress defences.

It is at the latter where many of those fine achievements have survived intact to this day, and the splendid buildings at Stirling are considered among the finest examples of Renaissance architecture still on view anywhere in Europe.

Unfortunately, his castle's magnificent frontage,

■ The celebration for the baptism of Henry, son of James VI and Anne of Denmark, in 1594.



# its greatness back



■ The aesthetic gave way to the practical – and the military. This is how the Great Hall was used in the 1960s, as an army barracks.

The Forework, which once towered above the main entrance, and was similar in style to the front of Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh today, is a shadow of its former self.

Behind those walls stood the rectangular area called the Inner Close, which was surrounded by the King's own residence, the Great Hall and Chapel Royal.

Many of the Stewart monarchs enjoyed the finer things in life, encouraging a climate of learning and enjoyment, which included regular and impressive jousting tournaments and a lions' den where both James IV and his father kept lions and other exotic wild beasts for entertainment.

From across Europe scholars, artists, poets, musicians, master craftsmen and even jesters came to the court at Stirling Castle.

The culture of learning is perhaps best illustrated by the Italian scientist John Damian who was accommodated at the castle – and, among other things, paid to carry out experiments which he hoped would change ordinary metals into gold.

In September, 1507, he also made an attempt to fly to France from the castle walls using wings he made himself. When the journey apparently came to a sudden and abrupt end in a midden below those walls, he is said to have ruefully concluded that he made a mistake in using hen's feathers as they had a more natural affinity for the midden than for the skies.

Many have since used those bad examples to ridicule Damian's work, but more sober analysis

suggests his experiments were viewed seriously, particularly by the King himself.

It's unlikely, however, that James IV would have been able to complete all his ambitions before his death on the battlefield at Flodden. Although James V died 12 years younger than his father – at the age of 30 – he was able to continue the impressive palace programme, his most notable legacy being the construction of Stirling's Royal Palace which was built to house his second wife, Mary of Guise.

This remarkable building, which survives largely intact, displays some of the earliest examples of the impact of Renaissance architecture in Britain.

The outer walls are adorned by statues depicting the Devil, St Michael, a patron saint of the chapel, James V and a number of classical gods and goddesses. Smaller statues of elephants, pigs, dragons and mythical beasts are also visible inside,

on the panelled ceiling of one of the King's rooms, were the superbly carved oak roundels known as the Stirling Heads, many of which have been preserved to this day. One depicts Mary, Queen of Scots' French female jester, Nicolas de Jardinier, who entertained at one of the most spectacular occasions to take place at the castle.

It was a three-day extravaganza in December, 1566, which marked the baptism of Mary's son James, and was so extensive that the Queen had to borrow the princely sum of £12,000 ▶

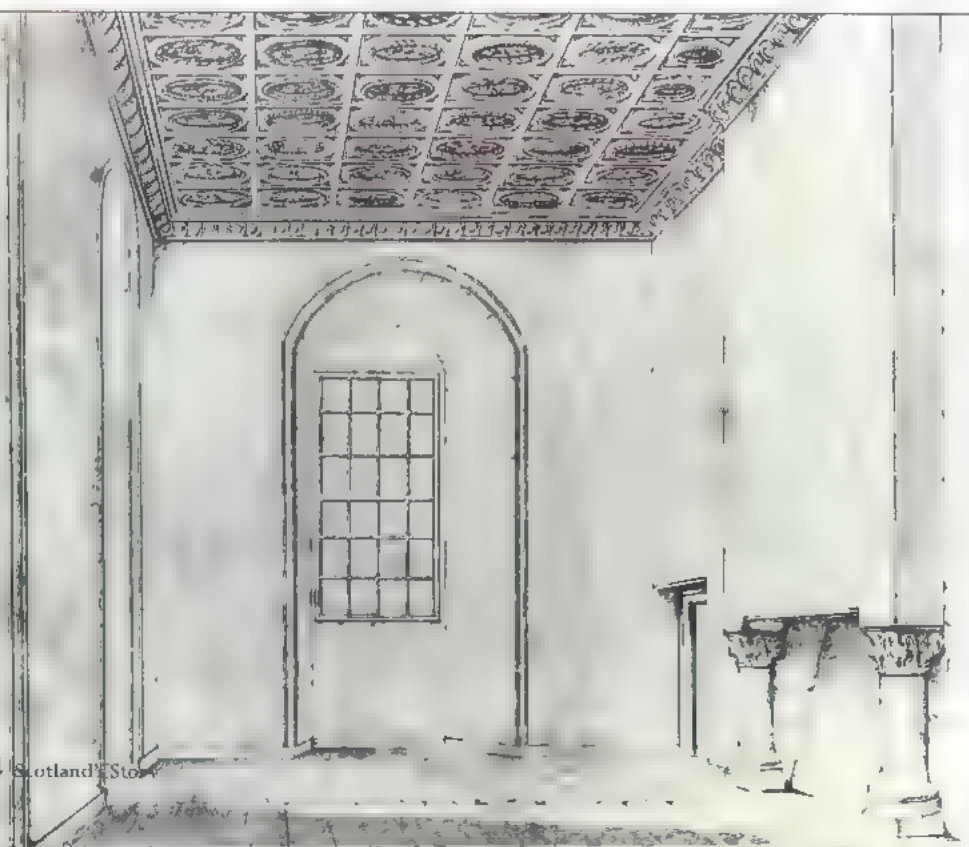


■ Stirling Castle's Forework once towered up to five storeys high.





■ Standing out like a beacon – the restored exterior of the Great Hall painted in the stunning King's Gold that Medieval townsfolk would recognise.



► from Edinburgh merchants to pay for it.

The final dinner was served from a moving stage, and it was said that 'the first two courses were served by satyrs and nymphs, the third by a conduit and the fourth was preceded by the recitation of a verse by a child who, like an angel, was lowered in a globe from the ceiling

On the third and last day of the celebrations all the visitors gathered to watch an allegorical stage of an enchanted castle on the open ground in front of the real castle, followed by a display of fireworks and artillery.

In 1594 the Great Hall played host to another lavish spectacle which marked the baptism of King James VI's son, Henry. At one stage of the main banquet a splendid ship,

■ An engraving from 1817, left, showing how the oak ceiling roundels would have been fitted in the king's rooms. The roundels, right, were superbly carved.





## At Mary's first Mass in the Chapel Royal her half-brother attacked the clergy, and priests were left with 'broken heads and bloody ears'

40 feet in height and 18 feet long, was brought in floating on an artificial sea carrying a variety of fish

But bitter civil conflict during Queen Mary's reign spelled the beginning of the end for Stirling Castle's most glorious period. When she returned from France in 1561 it was to a kingdom which had become Protestant, while she remained Catholic. The Chapel Royal may have reputedly been the only palace chapel still fitted out for Catholic worship, but at her first Mass there her half-brother, Lord James Stewart, Earl of Argyll, attacked the officiating clergy, and several leading priests were left with 'broken heads and bloody ears'

Following King James VI's succession to the English throne, the royal court moved to London and, over a long period, military requirements once again became paramount at Stirling Castle. Over the next few hundred years little attention was paid to the castle's great heritage as defences were strengthened and rooms often altered for practical rather than aesthetic purposes.

After the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders made the castle their base in 1881, Stirling became the victim of a drive to create army accommodation at all the major castles. The Great Hall was sub-divided almost beyond recognition into barrack rooms, while the Chapel Royal was split to form a schoolroom, dining room and stores.

The arrival of the 20th century brought a more sympathetic attitude towards the castle's history, and after the regiment moved out in 1964, efforts were made to reinstate its former Renaissance glory.

Today plans to return the castle to its original splendour are well advanced. The Medieval kitchens are once again alive. And the

Chapel Royal has returned to a place of proud worship.

Most strikingly, the Great Hall has been restored – after a painstaking and expensive refurbishment – to the 15th century design so craved by its architect, James IV.

No fewer than 350 oak trees were felled to provide the wood for the hammerbeam roof which was constructed using the original building techniques, and held together by doweling rods. Extensive work has

also been carried out on the stonework and windows.

Today the vast hall with its five fireplaces appears as it would have done when it was built around 1503. But what the Queen would have noticed most as she drove towards the castle on St Andrews Day, 1999, was the bright colour of the Great Hall's outside walls.

Harled, plastered and lime-washed, the Hall had shaken off its well-known grey exterior to be replaced by the original King's Gold finish.

Against the dark facade of the rest of castle, and

the town below, it stands out on the local skyline like a beacon.

But it's a colour which apparently covered the whole fortress at the height of its Renaissance glory, and there are suggestions that the entire castle and its walls could soon be dressed in the same bright clothing once again.

History is catching up with Stirling Castle. Perhaps that day the Queen was given her most enlightening experience on what it must have been like to reign over a Medieval royal court envied across Europe. ●



■ A sight fit for a queen, as conceived by a king – the Hall interior now restored to its old glory.



# Genius who sometimes got it wrong

**He said man would never fly and did not agree with Darwin. But William Thomson made a fortune from his ingenious inventions**

**W**illiam Thomson was one of the most important scientists Scotland has ever produced. His genius earned him a place as one of the founding fathers of modern physics and placed his name alongside other legends of scientific discovery such as Faraday and Einstein.

Born in 1824, Thomson was a brilliant inventor and discoverer though also a flawed one. Some of his theories were wildly inaccurate, but the ones he got right will ensure his place in the annals of Scottish history.

He contributed to a huge number of branches of physics, from developing theories of thermodynamics through to designing a compass and helping to lay transatlantic telegraph cables.

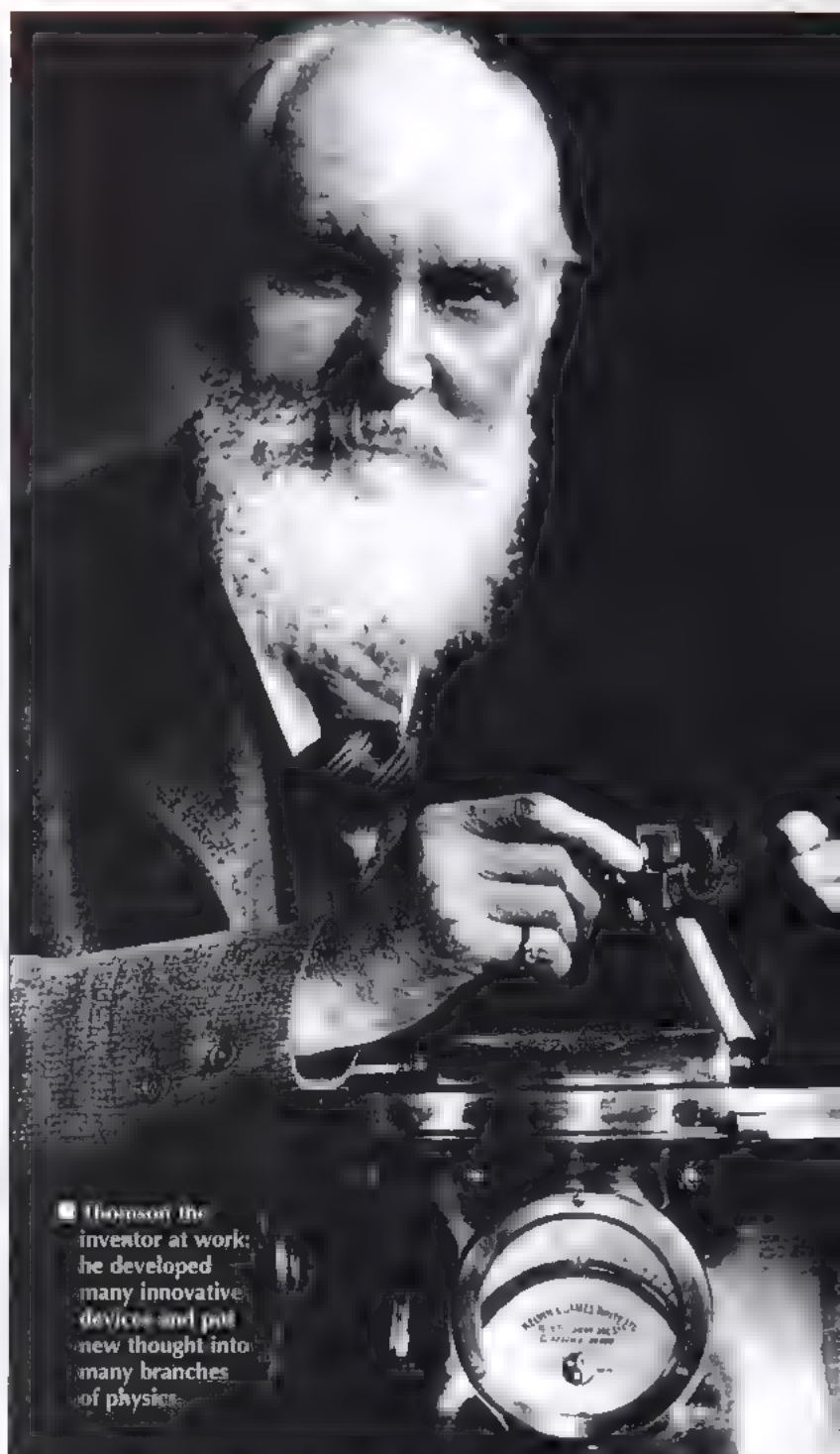
Thomson wasn't a Scot by birth – he was born in Belfast, and his mother died when he was six. Two years later, his father James was given a job as professor of mathematics at Glasgow University, and William went with him across the Irish Sea to Scotland.

The youngster exhibited his brilliance at an early age by being admitted to Glasgow University at the age of 10. By the age of 14, he was studying chemistry and astronomy, and he later worked on the disciplines of magnetism, electricity and heat.

When William was just 15, he produced a written work, his *Essay on the Future of the Earth*, which won him a gold medal from the university and contained ideas which would inspire him for the rest of his life.

By 1841, Thomson had progressed to Cambridge University, where he produced another vitally important paper – *On the Uniform Motion of Heat and its Connection with the Mathematical Theory of Electricity*. He read avidly, obtained a first class BA degree, and then went on to Paris, where he began to pull together several other scientists' ideas on electrical theory.

Then, in 1846, the chair of Natural Philosophy – the subject which today we call physics – fell vacant at Glasgow



Thomson the inventor at work: he developed many innovative devices and put new thought into many branches of physics.

University. Thomson's father, who was still teaching there, helped his son become the leading candidate for the job and, unsurprisingly, he got it.

Once back in Scotland, Thomson continued his research, particularly in the area of thermodynamics. In 1848, he produced an absolute scale of temperature, now universally known as the Kelvin scale, which was based on his studies into the theory of heat.

Four years later, he made another scientific breakthrough, recording the fact that the temperature of a gas drops when it expands in a vacuum. This is known as the Joule-Thomson Effect.

In the 1850s, he began work on the

dynamics of electricity and magnetism, linking the two together and contributing to the new discipline of electromagnetism.

Thomson also designed a receiver called a mirror-galvanometer which was used for the first telegraph transmissions via transatlantic submarine cable. The device allowed for the rapid transmission of signals across the Atlantic, opening up proper communications between the two continents for the first time and helping to make Thomson a very wealthy man.

Other devices he invented included a compass which was used by the Admiralty, and an early form of



# He made the rifle that didn't kill Washington

Patrick Ferguson was a superb military officer who invented the breech-loading rifle – and nearly changed the course of American history.

Born in Aberdeenshire in 1744, Ferguson was the fourth child of James Ferguson of Pitfour – an advocate who became a judge.

Young Ferguson enlisted as a soldier at the age of 15 in the Royal North British Dragoons, and served in Germany and the West Indies before returning to Britain in 1772 to develop an interest in improving the military rifles of the day.

The problem with the muzzle-loading rifles of the time was that they were slow to reload, hopeless in bad weather, and only effective at ranges up to about 80 yards.

Ferguson came up with the idea of breech loading instead, which would solve many of these problems and also allow soldiers to reload while moving or lying down. He developed an advanced flintlock rifle, which was a huge leap forward in terms of weapon design.

The military authorities were interested in his new invention, though somewhat cynical about its effectiveness. To convince them, Ferguson organised a demonstration in wind and rain in marshland near Woolwich Arsenal in London.

The display was a huge success. He managed to hit a target at 200 yards, firing at between four and six shots a minute and shooting while walking forwards. During the entire demonstration, he missed the target only three times.

Delighted officials ordered 100 of the rifles, which were finished in 1776. The next year it was supplied to a special regiment of

riflemen raised to go to America and fight in the revolution which was raging there at the time.

Ferguson's new-style rifle was put to the test in a skirmish with American forces at Chadd's Ford in Pennsylvania. It was judged to have performed well enough, though the encounter itself turned out to be something of a disaster.

Ferguson himself was seriously wounded in the arm and 40 men were killed.

The result was that the company was broken up and interest in the weapon declined very quickly. Unfortunately, very few examples have survived through to the present day.

During the battle at Chadd's Ford, Ferguson had an opportunity to change the entire course of

American history, but his basic human decency meant that he failed to take it.

George Washington, who was to become the

new country's first president, was fighting on the enemy side, and Ferguson was presented with an opportunity to shoot him at close range. However, because Washington had his back to him, Ferguson declined to shoot and chose to let Washington live.

Despite the severity of a wound he received in the battle, Ferguson went on to teach himself to write and shoot with his left hand. By 1780, he had been promoted to Inspector General of Militia in Georgia and the Carolinas.

Unfortunately, he died the same year when he was hit by American sharpshooters during the Battle of King's Mountain. It is ironic that a man who lived by the gun ended up dying by one.



■ Ferguson's breech-loader outclassed the old muzzle-loaders.

computer which could measure tides in a harbour and then calculate tables of those tides for any point in the future

He was as innovative a teacher at Glasgow University as he was in his scientific pursuits. He introduced laboratory work on degree courses for the first time, and also provided encouragement to his best students by offering them prizes.

Yet, for all his brilliance, he did have his failings. He did not, for instance, believe in Darwin's theories of evolution, and he got the ages of the earth and the sun wrong.

He also refused to accept the theory of atoms as the building blocks of matter, opposed early ideas about radioactivity and, astonishingly, dismissed the idea of powered flight by saying: "I have not the smallest molecule of faith in aerial navigation other than ballooning."

Yet within seven years of his saying this in 1896, the Wright Brothers had made the first ever airplane flight.

Despite his flaws, Thomson's genius was recognised and applauded – he did, after all, produce so many scientific theories that he was never realistically going to get them all right.

He was knighted in 1866 for his work on telegraph cables and elevated to the peerage as Baron Kelvin of Largs in 1892. Despite travelling all over the world, he spent much of his time in Scotland – and much of his fortune on a 126-ton yacht, *Lalla Rookh*.

In his lifetime, Thomson published more than 600 papers, picked up more honorary degrees than could be counted, and receiving a huge number of awards. He was elected to the Royal Society of London in 1856 and served as its president from 1890 to 1895. He was also three times president of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

He died at 83 in 1907 at his Scottish estate at Netherhall near Largs. It was a measure of his contribution to science that he was honoured by being buried in Westminster Abbey. ●

## Mina, a star among the stars

Williamina Fleming – or Mina, as she was popularly known – reached for the stars, and achieved fame by actually counting and cataloguing them. In 1907, the Dundee-born astronomer published a study of 222 stars she had discovered – despite the fact that she had no formal higher education.

She was born Williamina Paton in 1857, married James Fleming in 1877, and emigrated to Boston with her husband when she was 21. A year later, he left her while she was pregnant and she went to work as a maid

for the director of the Harvard Observatory. Her employer quickly recognised Mina's potential, and promoted her to do clerical work and mathematical calculations. With her potential unlocked, she went on to develop a system of classifying stars – and catalogued 10,000 of them in the 1880s.

In 1906, she was the first woman in America ever to be elected to the Royal Astronomical Society and in 1910 was the first person to discover 'white dwarf' stars, which are small, faint and very dense. She died in Boston in 1911.



# Stars who were

**D**uring the 1950s, one footballer above all others supplied Scotland's amateur comedians with a glut of material. Charlie Tully was the subject of dozens of anecdotes and funny stories – and only some of them were false.

It was claimed that when Tully went to see the film *Bonnie Prince Charlie*, he stormed out of the cinema because it wasn't about him.

When Celtic signed a Caribbean youngster called Gil Heron (whose son, Gil Scott Heron, later achieved success as a singer-songwriter), cheeky Charlie commented "That's great – now we've got a heron and 10 haddies."

There is a fund of apocryphal stories about the loveable Celt who became known and adored as the irrepressible Clown Prince of Paradise.

Charles Patrick Tully was born on July 11, 1924, in Belfast. Later, he joked about the event being celebrated with the noise of drums, flutes and accordions. Hours after his birth it had been, of course, the Orange Order's marching day.

Charlie soon became a big noise himself in his divided native city as a star with Belfast Celtic. When he fell out over money with the club's manager, Elisha Scott, word of the row filtered over the water to Glasgow. The Parkhead manager, Jimmy McGrory, had watched Charlie a couple of times and decided to move.

Discussions were held in the bookmakers' office of the Belfast club's owner, Patsy McAlinden, and the deal was later finalised in a nearby hotel. The cost to Celtic was £8,000 and Charlie's wages were to be £12 a week.

His first look at Glasgow was from the deck of the steamer *Royal Ulsterman*. There was no brass band or red carpet at the Broomielaw for the bright new star. There wasn't even a taxi.

As Tully didn't know where Parkhead was, he decided to head for the city centre, where he was directed to Willie Maley's restaurant.

Maley, who had been manager of Celtic for 43 years, got Charlie a cup of tea and then took him to the nearest tram stop.

And that was how one of the greats of Scottish football made his Celtic entrance in the summer of 1948. In his best Donegal tweed jacket with big leather buttons and a vent at the back, Tully thought he looked pretty swell.

That was until one of the Celtic stars, John McPhail, cuttingly asked if he reckoned the style would ever come back. Despite the ribbing, big John became one of Charlie's best mates.

Tully's first league game was against Morton in front of a crowd of 60,000. It was a goalless draw. Charlie shone at inside left but Morton goalkeeper Jimmy Cowan was in brilliant form.

A few weeks later, Celtic chairman Bob Kelly, who had a major say in team selection at the time, decided to switch Tully to the left wing.

Charlie was soon the scourge of right backs throughout the country. Months before, Celtic had narrowly avoided relegation. In those dour, post-war years, he quickly became the darling of the fans who adored his every feint, trick and exaggerated gesture. Even Rangers followers

## Fun was the name of the game for Charlie Tully when the Belfast Bhoys became Celtic's clown prince

reluctantly admitted this impish ball-juggler was something very special.

In 1951, he inspired Celtic to success in the Scottish Cup, their first honour in 13 years. But it was their victory in that year's St Mungo Cup which exemplified Charlie's penchant for cheek.

In the final of the tournament held to mark the Festival of Britain, Celtic were trailing Aberdeen 2-0 when Tully took a throw-in – and bounced the ball off the back of Dons defender Davie Shaw to gain a corner kick. Despite Aberdeen's protests, Tully took the kick, Sean Fallon scored, and Celtic went on to win 3-2.

Tully's outrageous skills were to the fore in 1953 in a Scottish Cup tie at Brockville when he scored direct from a corner to reduce Falkirk's lead to 2-1. Or so everyone thought, until the referee, for whatever reason, ordered a retake.

After a typical bout of arm-waving, Charlie took the corner kick again – and scored again and Celtic went on to win 3-2 again.

A fluke was it? Well, months earlier Charlie had performed an identical trick to beat the respected English goalie Gil Merrick as he inspired Northern Ireland to a 2-2 draw.

Tully helped Celtic win the League and Cup double in 1954, but his most memorable game for the club came on October 19, 1957.

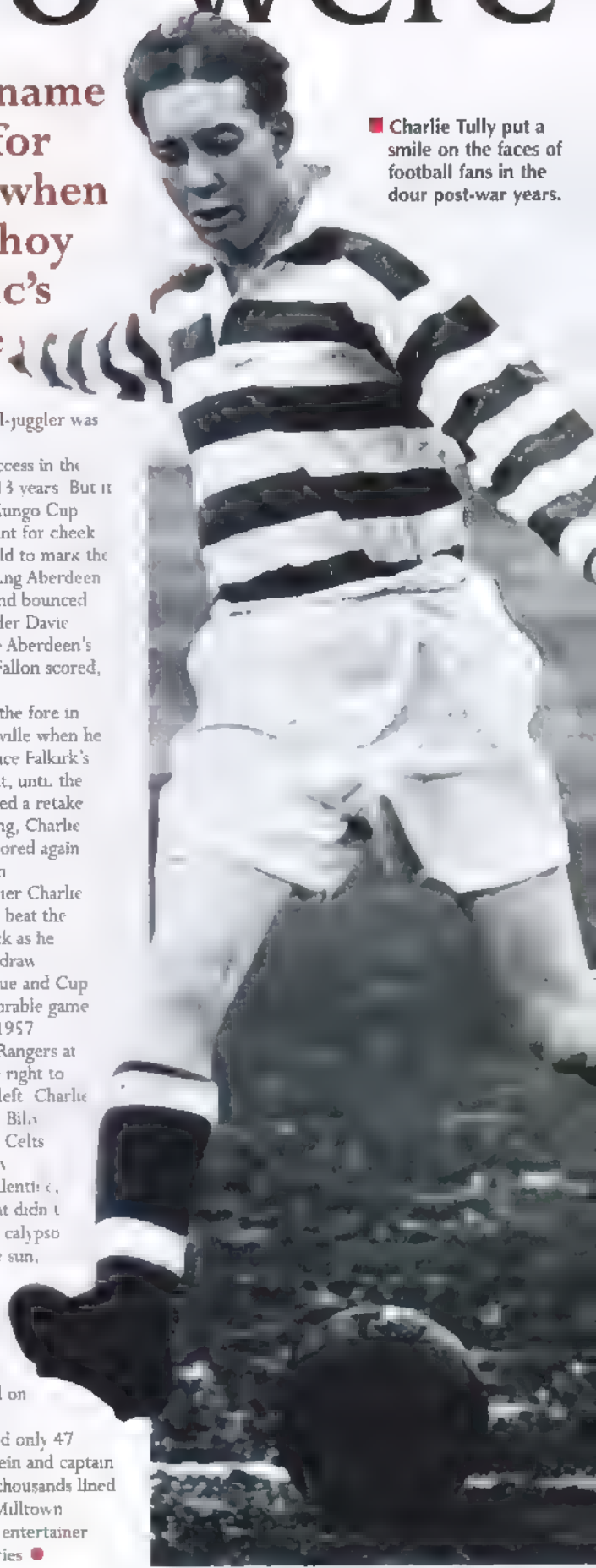
In the League Cup Final against Rangers at Hampden, he was played at outside right to make way for Neil Mochan on the left. Charlie terrorised the Ibrox club's defence, Billy McPhail scored a hat-trick, and the Celts clinched an unbelievable 7-1 victory.

The Rangers centre half, John Valentine, never played for the club again. That didn't stop cheeky Charlie singing a cruel calypso which began, "Oh, Hampden in the sun, Celtic seven and Rangers one, Billy McPhail did a dance and had poor John Valentine in a trance."

Charlie played his last game for Celtic in 1958. He became player manager of Cork Hibs, then moved on to Portadown and Bangor.

He died in his sleep in 1971, aged only 47. Celtic's legendary manager Jock Stein and captain Billy McNeill were pall-bearers as thousands lined Belfast's Falls Road on the way to Milltown Cemetery. A fitting send-off for an entertainer who left behind only happy memories. ●

■ Charlie Tully put a smile on the faces of football fans in the dour post-war years.





# Firm favourites

**Rangers forward Bob McPhail was the club's most faithful servant, but one tragic match left the Ibrox legend in tears**

**A**T the launch of his biography in 1998, Bob McPhail – still a fit and sprightly 93-year-old – sat alongside Ibrox greats such as Jock Shaw, Jimmy Smith, Dave Kinnear and Willie Woodburn.

The former stars were certainly in exalted company, for the title of Bob's book said it all about this grand old man – Legend.

His connections with Rangers spanned more than 65 years. No player or official did more, or were ever so loyal to a club.

Yet Bob first made a name for himself at Airdrieonians, where his partner in a formidable forward line was the great, yet tragic, Hughie Gallacher.

It was for the Lanarkshire club that Bob won the first of his seven Scottish Cup Final winners' medals, when Airdrie beat Hibs 2-0 in 1924.

Born at Barrhead on October 5, 1905, the seventh son in a family of 10, Bob achieved his lifetime ambition in 1927 when he joined Rangers.

They were the only club he wanted to play for. He turned down a host of offers from England to underline this.

There was no signing-on fee – and no agent to negotiate the salary. He got £6 in the close season and £8 when in the first team.

Incredibly, his wages were exactly the same 12 years later, but neither McPhail nor any of his team mates complained. It was considered good money at the time and, anyway, everyone got the same.

Bob greatly admired Rangers' long-time manager Bill Struth, who treated all the players equally and was always addressed as "Mister".

A prolific marksman, McPhail was only once out of Rangers' top three scorers between 1927 and 1939, and that was when injuries curtailed his appearances to 25 league games.

In his 12 seasons at Ibrox as a tricky, hard-working inside forward he scored 236 league goals. That record stood for nearly six decades until it was beaten by Ally McCoist.

Bob also went into Ibrox folklore as scorer of Rangers' 3,000th league goal in a 7-0 hammering of Cowdenbeath in 1930.

His 70 goals in 106 league matches for Airdrie, added to his cup goals for both clubs, brought his career total to a remarkable 355.

McPhail also took part in 23 Scotland and Scottish League matches. He starred alongside such wonderful players as Alan Morton, Davie Meiklejohn, Jimmy McGrory, Tommy Walker,

Charlie Napier, Jimmy Delaney, Jack Harkness and Jerry Dawson.

Possibly his best performance for his country came in 1937 when he sparked the loudest Hampden Roar in history by scoring twice in a 3-1 rout of England.

The crowd was 149,547 – still a record for a match played anywhere in Europe.

Despite his Hampden heroics, Bob never played at Wembley. In fact, his sad admission was that he had never even seen the place.

He missed out on being one of the Wizards who walloped England 5-1 in 1928 because the SFA selectors preferred wee men like Jimmy Dunn and baggy-breaked Alex James.

McPhail, then with Airdrie, wasn't even considered when the inaugural Wembley match ended 1-1 in 1924.

Between 1930 to 1936, the Wembley match was invariably the week before a Scottish Cup Final featuring Rangers.

McPhail was often struggling with injuries at the end of a long, hard season, and his preference was obvious if he had to choose between the two games. It has to be conceded, though, that he wasn't an automatic choice.

Undoubtedly the saddest moment of his career came on September 1, 1931. After an accidental clash with Rangers forward Sammy English, the brilliant young Celtic keeper John Thomson lay prone on the pitch at Ibrox. He died later that night in the nearby Victoria Infirmary from a depressed skull fracture.

McPhail revealed: "I cried, I just couldn't stop myself. I couldn't believe that one of football's gentlemen, one of the nicest lads I had ever met in the game, was dead."

The incident was a double tragedy, as it effectively ended the career of the devastated – and blameless – English.

Bob rated Sammy better than Hughie Gallacher, Jimmy McGrory or Jimmy Simpson. He had scored 53 goals in his first season at Ibrox.

As for McPhail, he won six of his seven Scottish Cup Finals with Rangers and scored in four, including the only goal against Third Lanark in 1936.

Hampden was a very special place for him – but his heart always belonged at Ibrox Stadium.

Bob McPhail became, literally, a legend in his own lifetime, and an impeccable example to young players on how conduct themselves on and off the pitch. ●



■ Bob McPhail, who won the Scottish Cup with Airdrie and Rangers, holds the trophy before the 1992 final between the clubs.





■ Otterburn was the site of a famous victory for the Scots when they pretended that the dead James, Earl of Douglas, was actually fighting on.

# Where death triumphed



**Bruce had gone, but the battles went on. Historian David R. Ross visits sites that still echo with steel**

It was unfortunate for the Scots that the son of King Robert Bruce, David II, did not take on board the legacy left by his illustrious father. The methods of Bruce were summed up in Good King Robert's Testament, written in the 1300s...

*On foot should be all Scottish war.  
Let hill and marsh their foes debar,  
And woods as walls prove such an arm,  
That enemies do them no harm.  
In hidden spots keep every store,  
And burn the plainlands them before.  
So, when they find the land lie waste,  
Needs must they pass away in haste;  
Harried by cunning raids at night,  
And threatening sounds from every height.  
Then as they leave with great array,  
Smite with the sword and chase away.  
This is the council and intent,  
Of Good King Robert's Testament.*

These sound principles were ignored to Scotland's cost at defeats like Dupplin Moor in 1332, the battle site is by the A9 south-west of Perth, or at Halidon Hill in 1333, just outside Berwick on Tweed.

This advice could also have saved the day at the defeat at Neville's Cross where David II was captured by the English. This battle site is straddled by the A1 just west of Durham.

King David was eventually returned to Scotland for the ransom of 10,000

marks per annum, but he unexpectedly died at Edinburgh Castle in February, 1371.

Luckily, ransoms do not have to be paid for dead men, so Scotland could breathe a sigh of relief.

Next up as ruler was Robert II, the first of the Stewart line of kings. Robert II himself would no doubt have been very surprised to know that he was the founder of a dynasty that was to rule for 300 years – and which was to inherit the throne of England in the shape of James VI and I.

The Scots won a major victory during his reign – at Otterburn in Northumberland in August, 1388, the famous battle won by a dead man.

The fighting raged throughout the night on the marshy ground below the Roman wall. As the two sides fell apart to draw breath James, Earl of Douglas, was mortally wounded.

As he was carried to the rear, Douglas was asked how he felt, and replied: "Right evil, but thank God few of my fathers died in their beds."

In the evocative Ballad of Otterburn, Douglas said:

*My wound is deep, I am fain to sleep,  
Take thou the reward of me;  
And hide me by the bracken bush  
Grows on yon lily-lee*

He then ordered his lieutenants to

take his banner back to the fight, to shout his war cry 'Douglas' and to let no one know that he was dead.

Towards dawn the exhausted English commander, Henry Percy – better known by his proud nickname 'Hotspur' – was asked by Sir John Montgomery of Eaglesham to yield. He said he would, but to whom?

*Thou shalt not yield to lord nor loon,  
Nor yet shalt thou to me,  
But yield thee to the bracken bush,  
Grows on yon lily-lee*

Hotspur yielded and Montgomery was able to extract a huge ransom for his safe return to England.

It was said that this ransom money was used to build the mighty Polnoon Castle, the scant ruins of which stand just to the east of the village of Eaglesham today.

The battlesite at Otterburn can be visited. A monument stands a little north of the village of the same name, which is just off the A68 – the road that runs south after crossing the Border at Carter Bar, south of Jedburgh.

Robert II died within Dundonald Castle. It stands atop its mound above Dundonald village in Ayrshire, a stone monument to the early days of the Stewart reign of power, and is open to the public. ●



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Armorial, Sir Francis Ogilvy Bart and The National Library of Scotland; p16/17/18 Elgin Cathedral Illustration, Elgin Cathedral and the Wolf of Badenoch: Historic Scotland. p19/20/21 Hell's Gaping Jaws and Plague Victims: British Library; Depiction of Plague Wiping out Adults and Children: Bodleian Library; Carving at Roslin Chapel: Great Scot. p22/23/24/25 Stirling Castle: Historic Scotland; King's Hall and Great Hall: Newsflash.

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